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Commission on the Status of Women

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Item 3 (c) (i) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalizing world

Statement submitted by International Federation of Business and Professional Women, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and Coalition against Trafficking in Women, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Miramed Institute, Mouvement pour l'abolition de la prostitution et de la pornographie et de toutes formes de violences sexuelles et discriminations sexistes, and World Federation for Mental Health, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2002/1.



Statement on Eradicating Poverty by Eliminating Prostitution and Empowering Women and Girls

Reaffirming the principals set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the International Declaration of Human Rights; the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children Supplementing the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

Recalling that "labour is not a commodity" according to the Constitution of the International Labour Organization and the Convention of Philadelphia;

Reaffirming the awareness of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery in its 2001 Recommendations "that sex traffickers, sex tour operators, mail order bride agencies and brothel owners promote and pander to racist stereotypes of the women and children they exploit";

Reaffirming the General Assembly Resolution 52/98 of 12 December 1997 on traffic in women and girls and the Report of the Secretary General A/53/409 of 21 September 1998,

Reaffirming the commitment to mental health made at the 43rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in the Economic and Social Council Resolution "Women and mental health, with emphasis on special groups" of 15 March 1999,

Recalling that governments have an obligation to punish any person who "procures, entices, or leads away, for the purposes of prostitution, another person, even with the consent of that person" as stated in the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Others,

Alarmed that the sex industry at local and international levels has been exploiting the economic desperation of millions of women and children who have been disproportionately marginalized by the

structural adjustment programs of the last fifteen years, especially targeting adolescents, children, and women with young children, widows, refugees, and displaced persons;

Alarmed by the spread of HIV/AIDS worldwide,

Noting with grave concern that the phenomenon known as "globalization" has brought in its wake instability of family incomes, petty and high level corruption of government officials, organized crime, and diminished capacity and/or political will of governments to act on behalf of persons living in poverty; increased warfare and unchecked violence at all levels of society;

Noting further that the act of prostitution should not be called "sex work" as it is not a form of labor but the selling of a human body as a commodity for the sexual gratification of the customer and the profit of the pimp and which exposes the prostituted adolescent, child, woman or man to assault, kidnapping, torture, murder, especially in brothel settings in addition to the inherent violence of sexual exploitation itself;

Convinced by the experience of survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and by research that prostitution and trafficking disempower women and children and in an overwhelming majority of cases result in acute physical and mental suffering and disabilities; increased economic destitution; substance abuse and other debilitating behaviors as well as revictimization by societies which equate prostitution with a moral failure by the victim or which seek to deny its harm by dignifying it as a form of labor;

Recognizing that women and children have the right to real solutions to poverty rather than institutionalized or regulated prostitution; namely housing, education, healthcare, sufficient food and clean water; as well as the dignity of labour, legitimate remuneration sufficient to support themselves and their families; bodily integrity, freedom of movement and freedom from physical and psychological threat;

Urges the General Assembly to adopt a resolution for the elaboration of an additional protocol to the three conventions on slavery and slavery-like practices to strengthen the effectiveness of these conventions through an efficient mechanism;

Urges United Nations agencies, States Parties and civil society, to reject development policies and projects which intensify the marginalization of women and children or which place them at risk of sexual exploitation, substance abuse, or sexually transmitted diseases;

Urges United Nations agencies and States Parties in collaboration with NGOs to develop community-based prevention programs especially targeting children, adolescents, women with young children, widows, refugee and displaced women by offering alternative livelihood projects and educating about the risks of commercial sexual exploitation,

Urges United Nations treaty bodies, in particular the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Committee on Human Rights to ensure that States Parties monitor and report on the extent and incidence of commercial sexual exploitation as well as on the violence accompanying them as well as on the establishment of economic alternatives for women and children such that by the year 2010 90% of country reports submit thorough documentation,

Urges United Nations agencies, especially UNIFEM, UN/AIDS, UNDP, INSTRAW, ILO, along with States Parties and Non-Governmental Organizations to refrain from language which dignifies prostitution as a form of labor or legitimately chosen condition such that all UN documents use appropriate language by the year 2005 and that 95% of the legislative and policy-making documents of States Parties reflect appropriate terminology by the year 2005,

Calls upon governments to decriminalize the act or condition of being sexually exploited, and to address the demand side of prostitution by criminalizing the acts of pimping, procuring, sex trafficking, brothel keeping, and purchasing of sex, regardless of the consent given by the sexually exploited;

Urges all governments to ratify the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others such the convention achieves 100% ratification by the year 2005.

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